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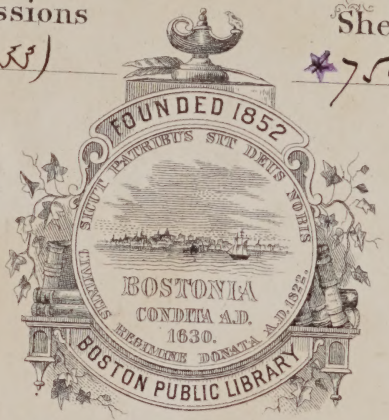

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REFLECTIONS AGAINST THE BAPTISTS REFUTED.

Presented —

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE

[illegible] THE BAPTIST MEE[illegible]

IN

[illegible]ORD, OCT. [illegible]

BY DANIEL SHARP,

REFLECTIONS AGAINST THE BAPTISTS REFUTED.

A

SERMON,

DELIVERED AT THE

DEDICATION OF THE BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE

IN

NEW-BEDFORD, OCT. 22, 1829.

BY DANIEL SHARP,

PASTOR OF THE CHARLES-ST. BAPTIST CHURCH, BOSTON.

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Dec. 30, 1891

SERMON.

ACTS xxviii. 22.

BUT WE DESIRE TO HEAR OF THEE, WHAT THOU THINKEST: FOR AS CONCERNING THIS SECT, WE KNOW THAT EVERY WHERE IT IS SPOKEN AGAINST.

NO wise man thinks it necessary to refute every insinuation which may be made to his disadvantage. Conscious of the rectitude of his motives, and of the habitual correctness of his deportment, he will trust to the impression which his conduct leaves on the community, in preference to personal explanations. Nor will he, pursuing a course which his conscience dictates to be right, be diverted from it by unkind remarks. If, indeed, some grave and weighty charges should be alleged, which may destroy his good name, or bring into disrepute principles which are dear to him, then he will consider himself called upon to defend his reputation, and to show that his sentiments have been unjustly assailed.

We see in the case of an individual the wisdom of such a procedure. And we believe its adoption by a church, or a denomination of Christians, is

equally proper. It is generally best to be heedless of indefinite censures; and to show by pureness, by knowledge, by Christian charity, and by faith unfeigned, that our good is evil spoken of, and that the censures which are cast upon us, are undeserved. Should it appear, however, that by misconception or misrepresentation our doctrines and practice are likely to be neglected, or treated with contempt, then we owe it not only to our blessed Master, but to ourselves, to exhibit our views of them clearly and explicitly, that if others will traduce either them or us, they may be left without excuse. But in doing this, we should avoid all bitterness and invective. We should "speak forth the words of truth and soberness, and in a spirit of meekness, and by manifestation of the truth, commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

We have regretted extremely, that very mistaken opinions have prevailed, and that very incorrect statements have frequently been made, concerning the sentiments which distinguish us as a Denomination. We have been accused of attaching an unreasonable importance to the ordinance of baptism, and of inflicting a great injury on our children by withholding from them a rite which would introduce them to a participation of covenant blessings, and render more certain their receiving that religious instruction, which would make them wise unto salvation.

It is probable that many have given currency to these accusations without due consideration. They have relied too implicitly on the representations of others without making suitable inquiries for them-

selves. Perhaps many, without being conscious of it, have been influenced by the prejudices of early education, and have too readily taken for granted, that all the unfavourable reports they have heard of us were true. So strong have been their antipathies, that they have been unwilling to listen to an impartial and full disclosure of our views: And a few, it is to be feared, in their opposition have been actuated by less worthy considerations.

If incorrect impressions of our denominational views, involved no other consequences than what might be deemed personal, namely, some reflection on our ignorance, credulity, or bigotry, we might go on, unmindful of the censure, having the testimony of a good conscience in the sight of God; but so far as these impressions cause any to slight an institution appointed by the Saviour, a regard for his authority should induce us to remove them if possible, by a candid exposition of our sentiments.

The Dedication of this neat and commodious House to the public worship of Almighty God, seems to be a suitable occasion for the discharge of a duty which we think we owe to ourselves and to the cause of truth. I trust, my friends, that you feel the same magnanimity which the "chief of the Jews" displayed, when Paul requested permission to explain to them the principles for which he was bound with a chain. They replied with a spirit worthy of Rome in its best days: "We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against." Be assured, my hearers, that it is not my intention

to use the language of recrimination. In reviewing the charges which have been brought against the denomination, it will not be for the purpose of exciting unpleasant feelings, in any one, but simply to show that they have no just foundation. With this explanation of my feelings and motives, I shall now proceed to consider some of the allegations which have been made, concerning our views in relation to baptism.

1. Our restriction of this ordinance to believers only, has been represented as fraught with danger to the salvation of our children. Plausible attempts have been made to sustain this charge by referring to two causes. It has been said, that parents who do not dedicate their children to God in baptism, are not so deeply impressed with a sense of their obligation to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and that unbaptized children are left to the uncovenanted mercy of God. These, my friends, are statements of serious import, and demand our special attention. If they are true, it behoves us immediately to abandon our present limited practice, to extend the rite to objects that are so dear to our hearts, and to imitate our brethren who have acted more piously and kindly towards their offspring.

But in reply to what has so often been reiterated against us, we must remark that we do not admit its truth. In confining the rite of baptism to believers, we do not feel, on that account, the less obligated to promote the present and eternal welfare of our children. Nor can we conceive how we possibly should, unless we believed that this ordinance, when

administered to infants, first calls into exercise parental affections, and constitutes the basis of parental obligation. Neither of which opinions can by us for a moment be admitted.

The hour which brings a child into existence, brings with it parental love. The associations which its entrance into being awakens, call forth a mother's tenderness, and a father's care. Its tears of helplessness, and its smiles of innocence, do but strengthen the new impulse, which its first appearance powerfully excited in the breasts of its parents. Our beneficent Creator has not left the welfare of our children to depend on an outward rite, but on the affections of our nature deeply seated in the heart.

We must know, if we are Christians, that our obligation to bring up our children in the fear of God, cannot rest on any external ordinance whatever, but on the close and endearing relations in which we stand to them and to our Maker. Our duty to provide for the wants of our children, to pray for them, to give them religious instruction, and to restrain them from evil, rests on obligations which are immutable. It arises from the nature and fitness of things, and can neither be diminished nor increased by any formal or public dedication of them to God. We believe that every parent should "train up his children in the way that they should go;" but we believe also that this duty is not founded on what has been denominated "the mere form of a ceremony," but on our natural and moral relations.

There are, no doubt, too many instances of professors of religion among us, who neglect the reli-

gious interests of their children. Alas! my hearers, I am afraid that we who are parents come far short in this duty. But what I insist upon is, that it is not the withholding of baptismal water from our children, which occasions our neglect, but the want of a more deep, enlightened, and habitual spirit of piety.

2. But it is said, that in not bringing our children to the holy ordinance of baptism, we leave them to the uncovenanted mercy of God.

If there is such a covenant, and baptism is the seal or confirmation of its blessings, then we are verily guilty of a great dereliction of duty. Let us for a moment examine this subject. A covenant is an agreement by which a person engages either conditionally or unconditionally to perform certain things, or to bestow certain favours. Before then we can claim a title to certain and special privileges by virtue of a covenant in our favour, we must prove that such a covenant has been made, and that its provisions extend to us. When a person dies and leaves a testament or covenant, his possessions must be distributed according to the specifications contained in that covenant. If no such instrument can be found, then the law provides for the distribution of his wealth.

In the case before us, good men have taken a fact for granted of which there is no proof. The Almighty has made no covenant with the infants of believers. We have carefully examined and re-examined the sacred writings, and can find no such document. After all our search, and we have not been

remiss. for we have children in whose salvation we feel as deep and tender an interest as do our brethren of other denominations, we can discover no such instrument, much less its specifications or conditions. Nor is there, so far as we understand the register of heavenly deeds, the least intimation, that baptism is the seal or ratification of its blessings. If there is such a will or covenant for the children of Christian parents, we have yet to learn that it has ever been produced, or set up, or approved, by the Judge.

But we are told, that this covenant was originally made with Abram and ratified by the rite of circumcision, that it is still in perpetuation, and ratified now by baptism in the place of circumcision. It is true, that the Lord did make a covenant with Abram and his posterity, in which the blessings entailed are distinctly specified. He promised* that he would multiply him exceedingly; that he should be the father of many nations; that his descendants should be honourable, for kings should come out of him; that they should have the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession, and that he would be their God. But in this covenant there is no promise of spiritual blessings to his posterity, except so far as external religious privileges may be deemed such. There is no engagement that his natural descendants as such should be heirs of eternal life. We need no other evidence of this than the fact that some of his immediate posterity died in impenitence and guilt, and

* Genesis xvii. 1—8.

that the Jews as a nation were finally rejected for their disobedience. He promised to the patriarch that he would be a God to his seed after him; and he was so, as he was their lawgiver and protector, and revealed to them his will, and established among them the ordinances of religion. But he was not their God in such a sense as necessarily includes the bestowment of divine pardon in this life, and bliss in the world to come. We think the apostle has clearly established this point. When urging on the Jews the necessity of internal piety, or "the circumcision of the heart," and assuring them that without this the outward circumcision would be of no avail, he meets the objections which he knew would be made. Rom. iii. 1, 2. "What advantage then," he asks, "hath the Jew; or what profit is there in circumcision? Much every way: *chiefly because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.* Here he plainly states that the chief blessing resulting to the Jewish nation from circumcision was their possessing the oracles of truth.

If, however, the Lord had actually made a covenant with Abram which contained the promise of spiritual blessings to all his posterity, this would supply no evidence whatever that similar blessings are promised to the children of believing Gentiles, unless it should appear that there is a special grant in that covenant which includes them. Where then, we ask, is the covenant made to the children of Christians? On what page of inspiration is it to be found? What are the blessings which it promises? Are they conditional or unconditional? And are the

supposed blessings realized? How does it happen, that a majority of those who are said to be in this covenant, and have had the seal of baptism impressed upon them, are among the children of disobedience? What has this covenant done for them, more than for those who are represented as being left to the uncovenanted mercy of God?

There is, my hearers, no such covenant. It is one of those fictions of theology, appertaining to a darker age, which are fast passing away. And we rejoice that some of the most learned and pious of our Pedobaptist brethren have candour to acknowledge in their intercourse with us, that the covenant made with Abram, and the rite of circumcision, have no bearing on infant baptism, and that the latter ordinance has not been instituted in place of the former.

"There is," says Dr. Emmons, "no evidence, in the New-Testament, that believers are now in the covenant of circumcision; but clear evidence to the contrary. For, they are neither under obligation to perform the duties of that covenant, nor entitled to any of its peculiar blessings. The bond of that covenant does not lie upon them; for they are not required to *circumcise* either themselves or their families. And it is equally evident, that they are not entitled to any of the peculiar blessings of that covenant. In that covenant, God promised to give Abraham a numerous posterity; but he makes no such promise to believers under the gospel. In that covenant, God promised that Abraham's seed should possess the land of Canaan; but he makes no such promise to believers under the gospel. In that cov-

enant, God promised, that Abraham's seed should enjoy great *temporal* prosperity; but he makes no such promise to believers under the gospel. In that covenant, God promised, that the Messiah should descend from his family; but that promise was fully accomplished at the incarnation of Christ."

Even those who still imagine that they can see a striking resemblance between the sign of circumcision and that of baptism, and who confidently assert that great benefits accrue from the latter, are not agreed as to what they are. It is the opinion of some, that "baptized children may, in a very important, though a qualified sense, be considered as infant members of the Christian church." Others on the baptism of a child feel themselves authorized in saying, without any qualification, "We yield thee hearty thanks, most merciful Father, that it hath pleased thee to regenerate this infant with thy Holy Spirit, to receive him for thine own child by adoption, and to incorporate him into thy holy church." Such is their confidence in the virtue of "the laver of regeneration by baptism," that they say, "it is certain by God's word, that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved;" thus intimating, that the eternal happiness of infants dying unbaptized, is uncertain. With the Bible in our hands we think it strange that the application of water in any form should be viewed as affecting the salvation of infants. We believe in their glorification after death, not because there is any moral efficacy in baptism, which makes them meet for heaven, but because God is just, and good,

and merciful, and because there is a plenitude of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

But why is there such a diversity of opinion, as to the blessings which God has provided for the baptized children of believers? Why all this uncertainty as to the nature and extent of the privileges to which they are entitled? Why cannot learned and pious men who believe in the existence of this covenant, agree as to the blessings it bequeaths? It would be considered strange in human affairs, if those who were interested in the testament of a person who had left large possessions, should acknowledge that they could not understand its import. If, after the most diligent and learned investigations, they should form extremely different conclusions, it would be fair to infer that the testator did not know the meaning of language, or that he intended to mock their hopes. But no one will thus dare to impeach that infinitely wise and faithful Being, who established the covenant of circumcision with Abram and his posterity. Why then, we repeat the question, do good men, who believe in the existence of a covenant which, they say, confers special favours on the children of Christians, on whom its seal has been affixed, differ so widely in opinion as to its character? We answer, because there is no such covenant, no such privileges, no such seal.

We feel it our duty to say more. It does appear to us, that a belief in the existence of such a covenant is not only unscriptural, but injurious in its tendency. We think it is calculated to quiet the consciences of young transgressors. Should they feel

conscious that their ways are displeasing to God, and experience momentary apprehensions of future wrath, may they not cling to the hope, that as their parents placed them in infancy within the limits of a covenant of mercy, they will eventually be saved? We speak from facts which have come under our own observation, when we say that there is danger, lest the young should depend on receiving the favour of God from some imagined privileges of descent, instead of earnestly seeking it for themselves. Many, it is feared, instead of forsaking their sins and believing in the Saviour, have trusted to what the supposed covenant with its seal would mysteriously effect for them, to the undoing of their souls. Religion is a personal thing. Whatever, therefore, withdraws the attention from the necessity of personal efforts in seeking salvation, by directing it to the fancied privileges of natural descent, or to what others have done for us at an unconscious period of our existence, is of dangerous tendency. Such we solemnly believe is the tendency of the doctrines which attribute "to baptism itself a mysterious inherent efficacy," and teach that the children of Christians are in a "covenant—spiritual, gracious, and immutable."

II. We have been accused of believing that baptism is a saving ordinance. And as we have reason to fear that many have given credit to this accusation, it is proper to say, that no representation can be farther from the truth. We do believe that baptism was instituted by the Saviour, to be observed by all his disciples. We therefore submit to it as an expression of our regard for his authority and of our love

to his name. But every one, by acquainting himself with our practice, may know that we hold no such sentiment as has been ascribed to us. Our churches invariably require satisfactory evidence of all candidates, that they are in a state of salvation, before they receive them to this rite. Like the harbinger of the Messiah, they ask for fruits meet for repentance; or with the evangelist they say, if thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest be baptized.

Besides, we do believe, that a multitude of Christians, which no man can number, who never were baptized, will enter the kingdom of heaven. We know that education and early attachments; the opinions of others, and the authority of great names, may either prevent persons from inquiring concerning this duty, or give to their investigations a wrong direction, and yet they may manifest such unaffected piety, and exhibit so much loveliness of character, that we are neither able nor willing to withhold our cordial affection from them as the disciples of Christ. Nor have we the least doubt concerning the future glory that awaits them.

Nay, more—we are fearful that some who have been baptized will be found on the left hand, in the day when God shall judge the world in righteousness. If, soon after his baptism, Simon Magus, was declared to be in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity, we have reason to fear that others who have put on Christ in this ordinance, may be in a condition equally awful. If any have been influenced merely by secular motives in making such a profession, if they have only attended to the external

forms of religion while they were destitute of its power, they will find that the waters of a flood had no efficacy to cleanse them from their transgressions. It has never been a part of our creed, that baptismal water could possibly purify any one from moral pollution. We have always maintained, that if a person went down into the water the slave of sin, he would come up out of it in the same miserable bondage, except with the increased guilt of having added to his other sins that of formality or hypocrisy.

III. The charge has often been made, that we substitute baptism for personal piety—so often, indeed, that many really believe we lay more stress on this ordinance, than on a holy life. It is said that even "gospel ministers have been actuated by such an intense zeal in favour of one particular form of this external rite, that they have seemed almost inclined to make it the sum of all religion." We can only say that we know no one to whom it would not be great injustice to apply these remarks. If there have been persons either in public or private stations, whose conduct has merited this censure, they certainly have acted inconsistently with their baptismal engagements.

We view baptism itself as a public and solemn declaration, that we are dead to sin, and that we are determined henceforth to live unto righteousness. "So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death! Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the

Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."* We have always avowed, and in our church discipline have acted on the principle, that no external rite, ever can be a substitute for a pious and moral life. We require of those who unite with us, proof of the sincerity of their profession, by adding to their "faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity." For we are persuaded, "he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins."

Where the works of the flesh are manifested in the life of one who has been baptized, and in the exercise of Christian charity received into the church, he must, according to our practice in the exercise of Christian fidelity, be excluded. It is a faithful saying, and these things we would affirm constantly, that they who have been baptized should be careful to maintain good works. We do hope, therefore, that we shall not again be unkindly charged with "substituting an excessive zeal for an outward rite, in the place of pure love to Christ, and to the immortal souls of men."

IV. Perhaps no censure of us has been so generally believed, or operated so much to our disadvantage, as the imputation that we are an extremely bigotted people. This is a stigma from which we would vin-

* Romans vi. 3, 4.

dicate ourselves. Bigotry is a blind zeal; an unreasonable attachment to certain opinions or practices. As we do not like the name, so we pray that we may never exhibit the character of bigots. We think, however, that an honest attachment to principles, and a conscientious conformity to the laws of Christ, are not bigotry. It seems to us that a strict observance of the order of Christ's house is not only reasonable, but perfectly consistent with the manifestation of the kindest and most respectful feelings for those with whom we do not walk in church fellowship.

The charge of bigotry, is chiefly founded on the fact, that we do not receive to the Lord's table, Christians whom we consider unbaptized. Our reasons are these. We believe that in the days of the Apostles, persons were invariably baptized before they were admitted to the Christian church; and that this arrangement should still be sacredly observed. This belief has led our churches to require that all who participate with them in the supper, shall have been baptized. Our conduct in this case does not originate in prejudice or caprice. We claim no authority to impose such a regulation, but we believe that our Lord has imposed it, and that we are bound to carry his regulations into practice.

We trust then we shall be credited when we say, that in not receiving our unbaptized brethren at the sacramental board, we are not influenced by any unkind feelings. For many of them we cherish sentiments of unfeigned affection and respect. But we love our Master more, and we feel persuaded

that we should depart from the established order of his church were we to admit to his table those who have not previously been baptized.

If, my friends, we err on this point, we certainly are not alone. With few exceptions all Christian denominations practise on the belief that baptism is a prerequisite to a participation of the Lord's supper. They admit none who have not in their judgment been baptized. The principle on which we and all other denominations act in this instance, is precisely the same. We may all be in an error. But until other Christian sects shall have discovered that the omission of baptism does not disqualify persons for suitably partaking the memorials of the Saviour's death, we must say, that they cannot censure our practice without condemning their own.

Besides, we are prepared to commune with all Christians in the noblest and most scriptural import of that expression. It has often been *significantly* remarked, "you will not commune with us now, but we shall all commune together in heaven." We rejoice in the blissful anticipation. But we are not willing to wait until that period. We would enjoy here an earnest of that sublime and celestial intercourse. We plead for a communion on earth, with Christians of every sect, which shall bear a resemblance to that of heaven. We do not suppose that the communion of "the just made perfect," consists in partaking of the symbols of Christ's death, but in high and spiritual intercourse; in mutual expressions of admiration and gratitude while reviewing the dispensations of providence and grace towards

them in this world; in mingled songs of praise to Him who hath washed them from their sins in his own blood; and in exalted converse concerning the glorious scenes which the revolutions of eternity will be continually unfolding to their delighted gaze. In such communion as this, although of a more humble character, we would gladly participate with all good men.

It would seem from observations which are frequently made, that there is no such thing as Christian communion, except at the table of the Lord. This we conceive is a great mistake. There is undoubtedly a communion of saints in this rite, but this is an incidental circumstance, rather than the special design for which it was instituted. This will more fully appear, by considering attentively the language of the New Testament on this subject. "Take, eat," said Jesus, "this is my body which is given for you: *this do in remembrance of me.* After the same manner he took the cup, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood: *this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.* For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, *ye do show the Lord's death until he come.*" The Apostle Paul states most distinctly the particular object of this feast, when he says: "The cup of blessing which we bless, *is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?* The bread which we break, *is it not the communion of the body of Christ?*"* Here is no intimation, that our Lord appointed the supper as a token of the communion which Christians have with

* 1 Corinthians x. 16.

each other. It was evidently intended for other and more important purposes. It was to be a perpetual memorial to his disciples of his bleeding and dying love, conveying the assurance, that although absent in person, yet he is ever mindful of their interests. And while it represents in appropriate and affecting emblems his unparalleled compassion, it gives vigour to their faith, animates their hope, and increases the ardour of their devotion and love. Hence the "cup of blessing which we bless, and the bread which we break," are not mentioned as means by which saints are to commune with one another, but by which they are graciously assisted to commune with Christ in his sufferings and death.

It is greatly to be lamented, that the controversy concerning the prerequisite for suitably communicating at the Lord's table, has given rise to incorrect views. The attention of Christians has been diverted from the chief design of the institution, that of "discerning the Lord's body," and fixed almost exclusively upon it, as the divinely constituted medium for manifesting their fellowship with each other. Thus weakening its legitimate effects on the heart, by considering that as its leading object which, at most, is only incidental.

But, my friends, if we are sincerely desirous of living in communion as becometh saints, there is a more excellent way, than even assembling together at the Lord's supper. It is better enjoyed, and more nobly illustrated in kind Christian intercourse; in abstaining from all unnecessary causes of strife; in bearing with each other's errors and imperfec-

tions; in mutual disclosures of our fears and hopes, our joys and sorrows; and in affectionately aiding each other onward, in the path to heaven. Should such be our conduct, then will ours be the communion of saints, although we may be connected with different sections of the church universal.

If the remarks which have been made in this discourse are just, we learn the importance of constantly guarding against a hasty and uninformed judgment of other denominations. We should never substitute suspicions for facts, nor ascribe to others sentiments which they uniformly and publicly disavow. As the consequences may be more extensively injurious, so it is far more censurable to circulate evil reports against a whole sect, than it is to take up a reproach against our neighbour. In the latter case only one may suffer, in the former the religious character of thousands is involved. Nor should it be deemed a sufficient apology, that we *thought* we were speaking the truth. We should be sure that our representations are true.

Let us, my friends, cultivate that "charity, which thinketh no evil; which doth not behave itself unseemly; which rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." If we should hear any thing said to the disadvantage of another denomination, let us think it possible that it may be untrue; and if necessary that we should form our opinion, or act in relation to such a statement, let us do it understandingly, impartially, charitably. Our text furnishes us with a laudable example of candour. The Jews

were strongly prejudiced against Christianity; but when in Rome, Paul sought an interview with the most eminent among them, and they said, "We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest; for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against." Their conduct is worthy of our imitation. Let us, then, never attempt to promote truth and piety by bitterness, and wrath, and evil speaking. Such a course is directly adverse to the benignant and peaceful spirit of Christianity. It widens the divisions which unhappily exist among good men, and what is still worse, it confirms unbelievers in their prejudices against the gospel: For, instead of being compelled to exclaim, "See how these Christians love one another!" they point with triumph to their dishonourable quarrels.

We also learn that popular opinion is no test of truth. The first Christians were every where spoken against. To the Jews, the cross of Christ was a stumbling-block; and to the Greeks it was foolishness. The doctrines which the Apostles preached were spoken of as the babblings of ignorant men; and their practices brought upon them the charge of an unnecessary singularity. They were esteemed fools for Christ's sake. They were "buffeted, reviled, persecuted, defamed, and made as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things." But amid all this clamour, and ridicule, and opposition, they were right. They had the truth on their side, and were approved of God.

If you are desirous of knowing whether the views and practices which distinguish our denomination

from others, are correct, neither ask the many nor the few, the learned nor the ignorant, the rich nor the poor, but search the Scriptures. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." We are willing, nay, we are desirous, that our sentiments should stand or fall, as a just investigation of the Bible shall determine.

Let it be your concern, brethren, to show by a kind temper, and a godly conversation, the excellence of your principles. "If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above. Put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of Him that created him." We trust you will need no "epistles of commendation," to exalt you in public estimation. Let your conduct so speak for you, that you shall be known and read of all men, as "the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. Ye have received the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore walk ye in him. And as you have been buried with him in baptism, show also that ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead. Then, although we may be absent in the flesh, yet we shall be with you in spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the steadfastness of your faith in Christ."

(Feb., 1891, 20,000)

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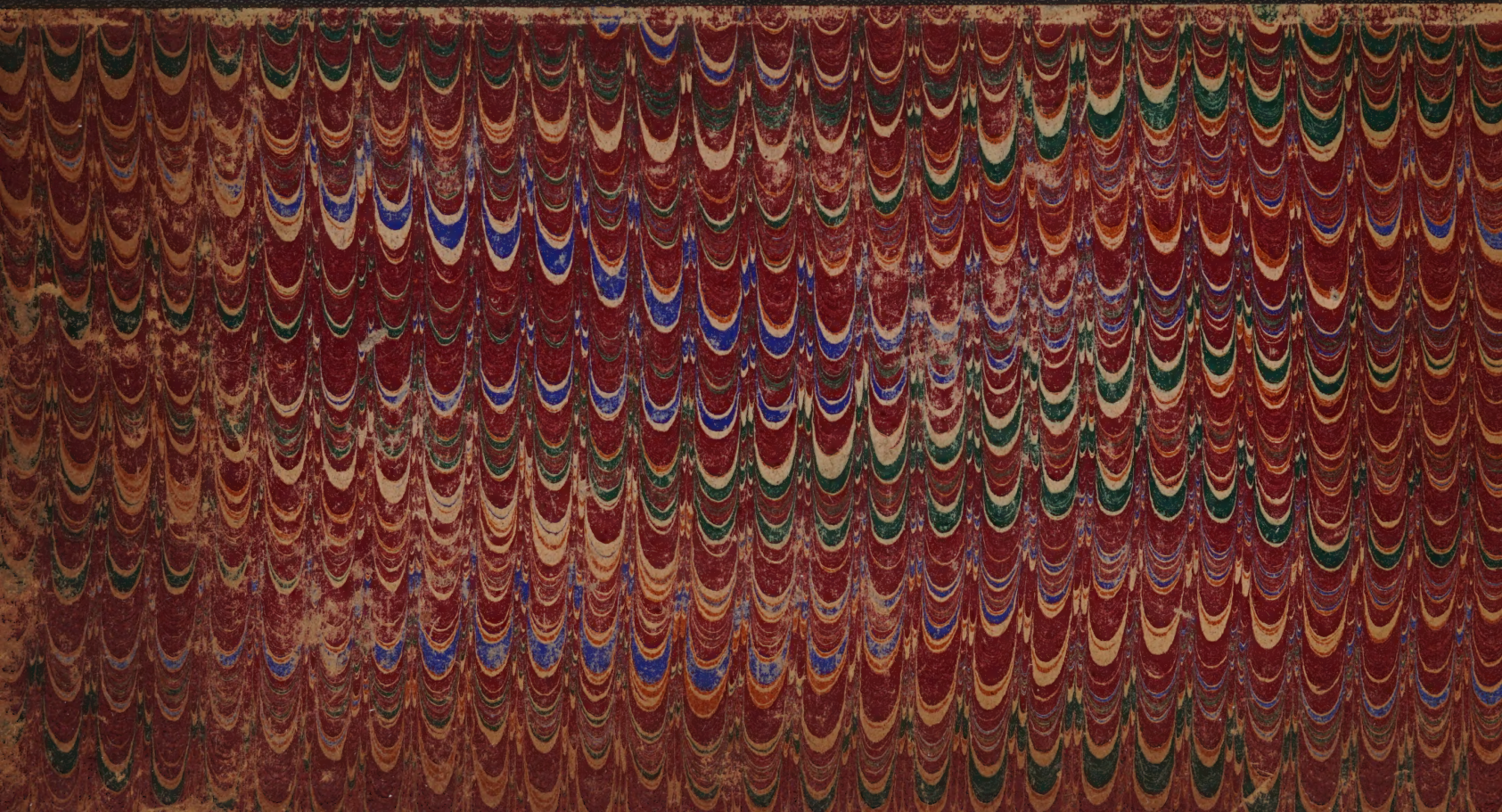
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